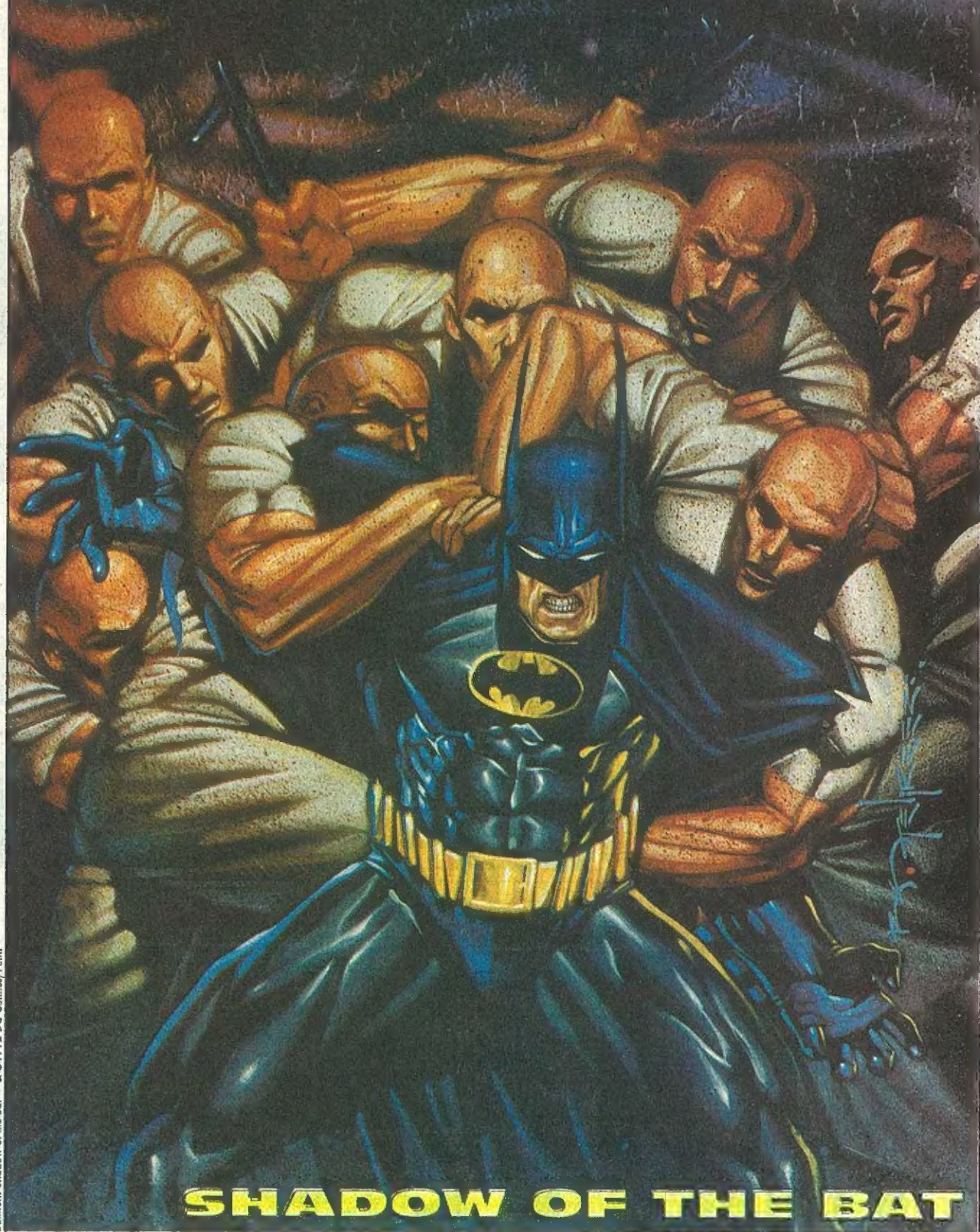


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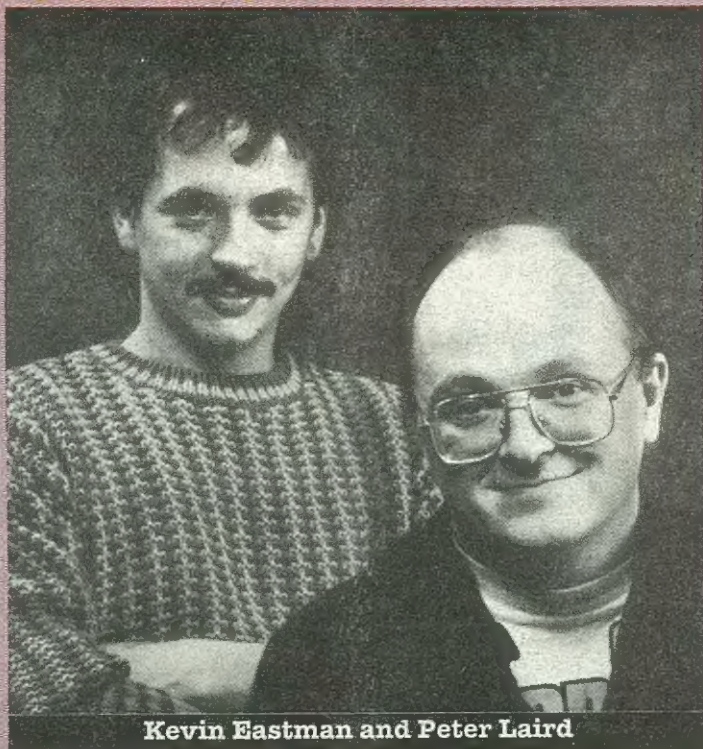
SHADOW OF THE BAT

Donatello, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Kevin, and Peter

Can it really be almost eight years since the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles first appeared on the comic book scene? Believe it or not, the better part of a decade has passed since that first issue's *Bonin*-esque cover first caught readers' eyes. What's even more surprising is that it's been just about three years since Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird were actively involved in producing *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*; since *TMNT* #21, the book has been produced by a variety of talents offering their own renditions of the Turtles. That all changes this August, though, when Eastman and Laird return to their ultra-famous creation just in time for *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #50.

TMNT #50 picks up more or less where Eastman and Laird's last three-part storyline left off. "The actual plot came out of a feeling that maybe the Turtles were getting a bit stale in Northampton, and that there were too many loose ends, like what happened to the Foot after The Shredder was killed?" Peter Laird said. "There was this incredible infrastructure of crime and once its head is gone, what happens, where does it go? Whereas the Turtles did come to terms with a lot of stuff in Issue #21 with The Shredder, there are still a lot of unaddressed issues. Also, we wanted to address some of the concerns about the characters of Casey and April. They seemed to be going nowhere and we wanted to move them along."

"The Turtles have defeated their enemy, and all of a sudden they've lost direction in some ways," Kevin Eastman said. "Their world is changing and they need to adapt, to grow up. This was the idea we wanted to pursue once we returned to the book." According to Eastman, this storyline was one of two that the Turtles' creators had discussed after the completion of the "Return to New York" storyline in *TMNT* #s 19-21 (the other was a story entitled



Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird

"The Masterpiece, which Eastman enigmatically describes as 'the last Turtles story we intend to do in the future'; now, three years, two movies, dozens of cartoons and hundreds of toy figures later, Eastman and Laird are picking up where they left off."

"City at War," the storyline that begins in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #50, is a massive thirteen-part saga that will conclude in *TMNT* #62. In this storyline, the Turtles are faced with a potentially explosive situation that they must deal with by themselves, for Splinter has all but abandoned them. Are the Turtles ready for the next step in their heroic evolution? Does good always triumph over evil? These are questions that Eastman and Laird will explore. "It seemed appropriate after eight years of publishing the comic for Kevin and I to jump back to basics and celebrate the fiftieth issue by working on it together," Peter Laird said—and there's no doubt that every Turtles fan will wholeheartedly agree.

The celebration of fifty issues of Turtles excitement will be celebrated in a variety of

ways in addition to the return of the series' original creators. Mirage Publishing will also release a special commemorative bust of Leonardo, sculpted by cover artist A.C. Farley and limited to only five hundred busts, each numbered. These \$75 busts, scheduled for August release to coincide with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #50, will only be available in comic shops.

Also scheduled for August release is a deluxe commemorative reprinting of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #1, slated for release in both hardcover and softcover editions. According to Mirage, "This is a high-quality color reproduction of the ground-breaking first issue and features a new cover and never before seen sketchbook art. The color scans of Eastman and Laird's original toned pages will attract fans both old and new."

In July, Mirage will pave the way for the fiftieth-issue celebration by reissuing the massive *Collected TMNT Book One*, a 540-page volume reprinting *TMNT* #s 1-11 and all four microseries. A.C. Farley is supplying an all-new cover painting for this \$16.95 trade paperback.

Late this summer, Mirage will also unveil a new anthology title that will feature both Turtles and non-Turtles stories. Like the recent *Turtle Soup* mini-series, the new Michael Dooney-edited book (which has no title so far) will include a number of different short stories—but unlike *Turtle Soup*, the new book will be a black-and-white title. *Turtles* co-creator Peter Laird has promised to do a computer-generated Turtles story for each issue of the anthology book.

With the summer of 1992 promising a return of the *Turtles* creators in classic reprints as well as an all-new storyline, this season is sure to be one of the most memorable since Turtles-mania first swept the world years ago. And if this isn't enough, Mirage has other Turtles surprises in store for later in '92!...

by KIM B. PEARSON

Batman's Casting a Mighty Big Shadow

Promotional items have often been very popular with collectors; such rarities as promotional posters, counter displays, stand-ups, and mobiles have been hot commodities with fans who often had to pay premium prices to acquire these promos.

Batman: Shadow of the Bat #1 is sure to please fans who would like to have some of these attractive promotional items without having to pay the high prices they often command. DC is offering this landmark first issue in two different forms: for fans who just wish to enjoy the comic, they can pick up the book alone for only \$1.50. For those who would like copies of some of these promotional items being released in conjunction with the

book, though, DC is offering *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* in a bargain-priced collector's polybagged set featuring a copy of the book, two posters, a blueprint of Arkham Asylum, an Arkham Asylum stand-up, and a specially-designed bookmark. At only \$2.50 for the Collector's Set, this package gives even the most budget-conscious fan a chance to add these items to his collection.

Batman: Shadow of the Bat #1, written by Alan Grant, illustrated by Norm Breyfogle, and featuring cover art by Brian Stelfreeze, is scheduled for May 28th release. (For a review of the first issue of this new series, see this issue's *CSN Give and Take* beginning on page four.)

by ALEX KIRKLAND

The Pack Is Back--With An All-New Ending!



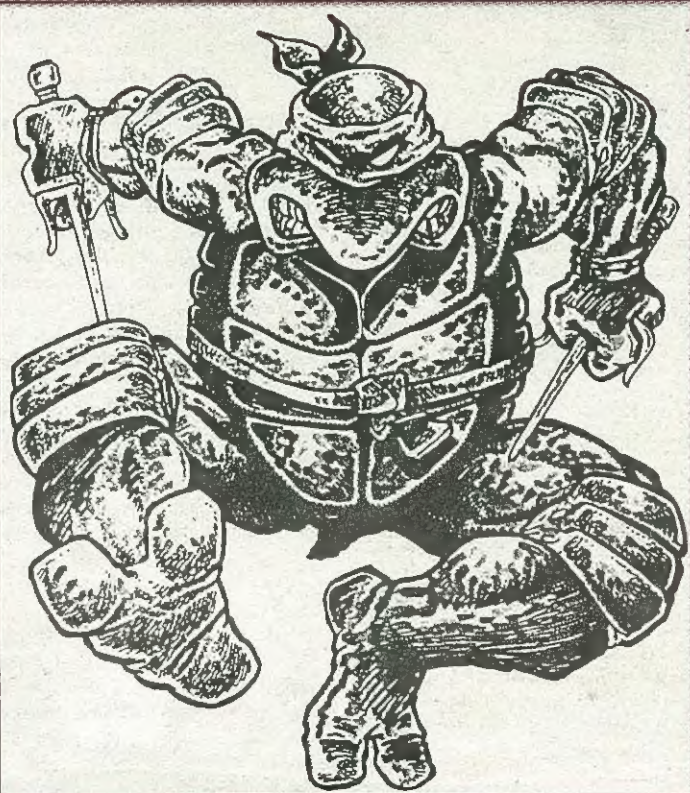
Bratpack #1 ©1992 Rick Veitch

Later this summer, Rick Veitch's revisionist look at super-heroes, begun in the *Bratpack* limited series, continues in a new ongoing series, *The Maximortal*. Prior to the debut of the new series, however, Veitch's *Bratpack* will be collected into a single volume, complete with fourteen new pages of interior art and an all-new ending.

Bratpack is the first book in the King Hell Heroica cycle, offering a provocative look at the superhero-sidekick phenomenon. The book, intended for mature audiences, explores such issues as why an adult would risk a young person's life on a regular basis—and why do these superheroes need sidekicks to begin with?

The comic-shop version of the *Bratpack Collected Edition*, priced at \$13, will feature a full-color wraparound cover not found on the mass-market edition as well as the new art and the new conclusion. Neil Gaiman supplies the introduction. The *Bratpack Collected Edition* is also being released in a deluxe limited edition hardcover featuring embossed front and back covers, an eight page color section, an illustrated dustjacket, and vellum endpapers. This deluxe edition, signed by Rick Veitch and limited to 1000 numbered copies, is priced at \$50. Both editions are scheduled for July release.

by WAYNE LEE



TMNT #50 ©1992 Mirage Publishing

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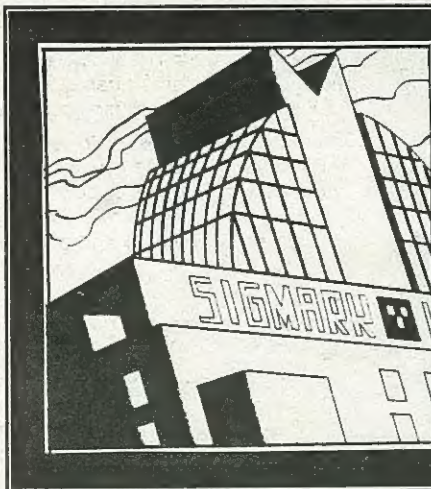


From Your Friendly Neighborhood Comics Outlet



It's a Cool World After All

DC's **Cool World** limited series is a prequel to the upcoming *Ralph Bakshi* film of the same name; when the miniseries wraps up its run this summer, DC plans to follow it up with a **Cool World** movie adaptation. The 64-page new-format adaptation is written by *Michael Eury* and illustrated by *Allan Kupperberg*; it chronicles voluptuous doddle Holli Would, who is willing to do anything to become a flesh-and-blood human—but once she gets her wish, she discovers that being human isn't all she thought it would be (and what a human she is—Kim Basinger plays the human Holli Would in the film). The **Cool World Movie Adaptation** is priced at \$3.50; look for it on July 9th.



SF Noir

CSN has already told you about *Monster Comics'* adaptation of **The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari**, due in April; for those who prefer their horror with a high-tech edge, *Monster* has announced a futuristic retelling of the *Caligari* legend, **Caligari 2050**, that debuts in May. **Caligari 2050**, described by creator *Ken Holewczewski* as "a techno-gothic horror," updates the story of a somnambulist killer and his hypnotist mastermind; in the new version, the investors behind the development of a massive, experimental computer are being murdered by a mysterious, shadowy figure—and they have suspicions as to who is behind the killings. **Caligari 2050 #1**, the first issue of a three-issue limited series, is priced at \$2.25.

Speed Racer in 3-D--Sort Of...

Speed Racer and 3-D—that's the combination you'll find on **Speed Racer Video Volume XV**. The video itself isn't in 3-D, mind you—but the box is! Now *Comics* is packaging the videotape in a hologram video sleeve in honor of *Speed Racer*'s twenty-fifth anniversary, so *Speed Racer* collectors will want to make sure to reserve a copy at their local comic shop. The 25-minute VHS videotape features "Race the Laser Tank," a tale involving a mysterious woman, a group of assassins, a roll of microfilm, and (of course) *Speed Racer*. Look for **Speed Racer XV**, an \$11.95 videotape complete with holo sleeve, in July.

Impel Reserves Skybox

Impel, the company responsible for the immensely popular **Marvel Universe Cards**, **DC Universe Cards**, and **Star Trek Cards** (as well as **Disney Cards**, **Terminator Cards**, and many others), is about to fade away—as Impel, that is. The company is changing its name—but not its products, which will continue to be the same high-quality cards that Impel was famous for—to **Skybox**, which is the name of one of their most popular sports card series. This won't have any bearing on the cards themselves, of course—but now you'll know what's going on when you find your favorite comics-related cards with a different company logo.



Space: The Far-From-Final Frontier

Taylor Publishing, the company responsible for **Horror Comics** and **Superhero Comics of the Silver Age**, continues its series of comic book histories this summer with the release of volume three, **Science Fiction Comics**. This hefty volume, prepared and written by comics historian *Mike Benton*, offers a historical overview and a comprehensive sf comics checklist, along with more than three hundred full color illustrations. From Flash Gordon to space opera to sf monsters to Luke Skywalker to **Twilight**, they're all here in this \$24.95 hardcover volume. Look for **Science Fiction Comics** in June—and as with all specialty items of this sort, you might want to let your local comic shop know that you're interested (and tell 'em that **CSN** sent you, okay?)...

Three-Oh In Three-Dee

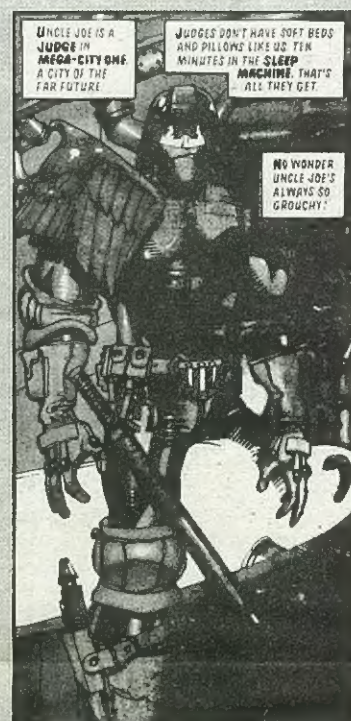
Spider-Man's thirtieth anniversary certainly will be an event to remember; not only is *Marvel* offering a 4" x 5" hologram in the thirtieth-anniversary celebration issue of every *Spider-Man* title, but they're also adding extra story pages. The granddaddy of them all is **Amazing Spider-Man #365**, a whopping 80-pager featuring a lead story by *David Michelinie* and *Mark Bagley* that reintroduces the Lizard; a new



contribution by Spidey co-creator *Steve Ditko*; stories by *Stan Lee* and *Tom DeFalco*; and a shocking surprise ending that may change forever what readers know about the origins of *Spider-Man*. This all-star deluxe edition, priced at \$3.95, is scheduled for June 11th release. (As a special bonus, *Marvel* and *Impel* will be offering a very limited edition special set of **Spider-Man trading cards** in conjunction with this special issue; ask your local comic shop for more details about price and availability.)

Extra Relief

We've told all of you again and again just how entertaining **Comic Relief** is—and now there's even more entertainment in every issue! Beginning in July, **Comic Relief** goes to a fifteen-times-a-year schedule—and they up the page-count of each issue to eighty pages! That's right, more material in every issue and more issues every year—what could be better? **Comic Relief #40**, the first 80-page issue, is the special "Summer Sizzle Relief" issue, focusing on the Presidential campaign. Of course, the magazine will continue to offer heaping helpings of *Calvin & Hobbes*, *Doonesbury*, *Life in Hell*, *The Far Side*, *Outland*, and many other popular strips. (Once these guys develop an appreciation for *Fox Trot*, they'll be perfect!...) **Comic Relief #40**, a July release, is priced at \$3.50.



Bisley Fans Won't Dredd This Book!

Simon Bisley fans take note: you won't want to miss **Dredd Rules! #10**, a July release from *Fleetway-Quality Comics*. *Simon Bisley* illustrates an all-new story, "A Mega-City Primer," in this issue—and if you thought *Lobo* was the quintessential tough guy, then you have quite an entertaining experience awaiting you! **Dredd Rules! #10**, a \$2.95 32-page quality-format comic, also features a second story spotlighting the *Block-survivors* who don't believe that the *Sov-War* is over—and as they continue to battle imaginary enemies, they're wreaking havoc on the lives of *Mega-City One*'s citizenry.

Mailtrucks & Dinosaurs

If you've ever read an issue of **Xenozoic Tales**, then you're probably hooked on *Mark Schultz*'s artwork. Well, get ready for an all-new dose of *Schultz* art in June; unfortunately, it's not another issue of **Xenozoic Tales**—but it is a set of six **Xenozoic Tales Postcards** featuring original art by *Schultz*. Each 4" x 6" card features full-color artwork that is unavailable anywhere else; the cards are available for \$1 each or in a six-pack for \$4.95. Let your local comic shop that you can't live without 'em—and tell them that **CSN** sent you, okay?...



COMIC SHOP NEWS

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Editorial Office:

2339 Milstead Circle
Marietta, GA 30066
fax (404) 973-6949

Business Office:

931 Forest Park Lane
Suwanee, GA 30174
(404) 339-7446

Editors

**Ward Batty &
Cliff Biggers**

Publisher

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Aquaman #9 ©1992 DC Comics

Giving the Devils Their Due

Aquaman may be uniquely qualified to serve as the champion of the aquaverse, but he's not the only protector of the oceans. In **Aquaman #9**, a June 25th release, the Sea Devils guest-star—but they soon find themselves fighting against Aquaman when the Devils target a South American oil rig for attack. Aquaman tries to stop them—not for the sake of the oil industry, but for the sea life that will be threatened as a result—but things go wrong, and Aquaman has to fight the Sea Devils and try to save the animals at the same time. **Aquaman #9** is written by Shaun McLaughlin and illustrated by Vince (Badlands) Giarrano.

For Those Who Wish To Be Alien-ated...

Alien³, the latest film in the popular science fiction series, is set to debut this month; in conjunction with its release, Star Pics will debut their **Alien³ Movie Trading Cards**. This series will feature full-color photos from the new film as well as selected photos from previous films. The cards also include behind-the-scenes cards and pre-production artists renderings. But there's something

else that should be of real interest to comics fans...

Star Pics has contracted with Dark Horse Publishing to include a special nine-card **Alien³** subset featuring all-new artwork inspired Dark Horse's various **Aliens** series, illustrated by such talents as Huang Nguyen, Paul Gulacy, Chris Warner, Ron

Randall, Tim Bradstreet, Tim Sale and Rick Magyar. Furthermore, each card back of the subset features a different panel of an all-new Dark Horse **Aliens** strip; when you put all nine cards into a card sleeve, the back reads as a comic book page. If you don't have this set, you won't have a truly complete run of Dark Horse's **Aliens** comics! Random packs will also include **Aliens** tattoos. The **Aliens³ Movie Trading Cards**, priced at \$1.50 per pack, are scheduled for June release.

...Where No Graphic Novel Has Gone Before

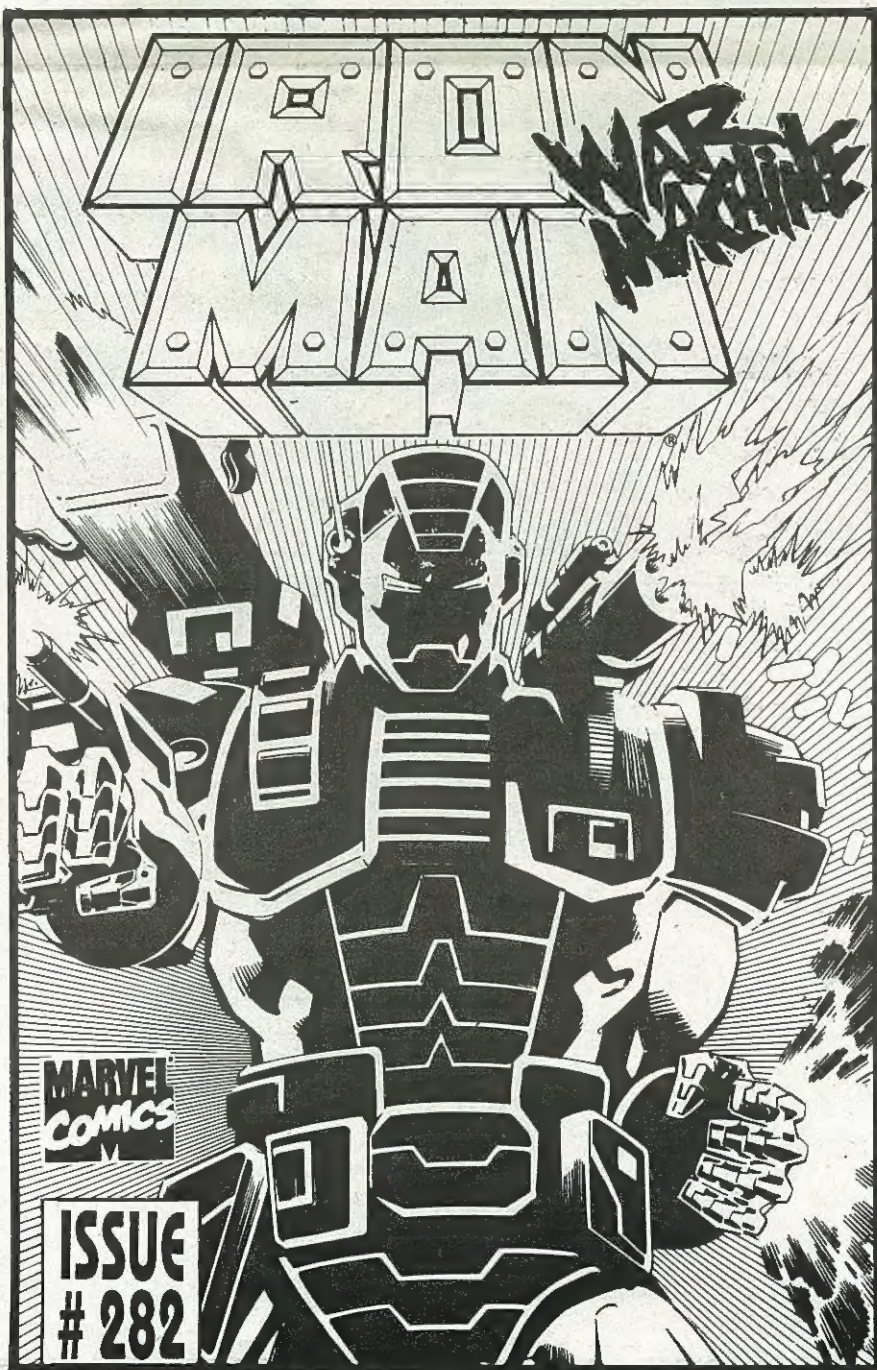
Remember **Star Trek: Debt of Honor**, the major new hardcover **Star Trek** graphic novel by Chris Claremont and Adam Hughes that was originally slated for December release? We were as disappointed as anyone when we heard that it had been postponed—perhaps even more disappointed, since we had the opportunity to read the first half of the book and were eagerly awaiting the conclusion.

Now we'll all have a chance to enjoy the entire book: DC has added **Star Trek: Debt of Honor** to its schedule, slating it for July 9th release. The 96-page hardcover graphic novel spans the career of Captain Kirk from his days as a lieutenant on the Starship Farragut as he confronts a deadly and mysterious menace. That threat has arrived again and Kirk and his loyal Enterprise crew must defy Starfleet and ally themselves with both the Klingons and the romulans in order to defeat this common foe.

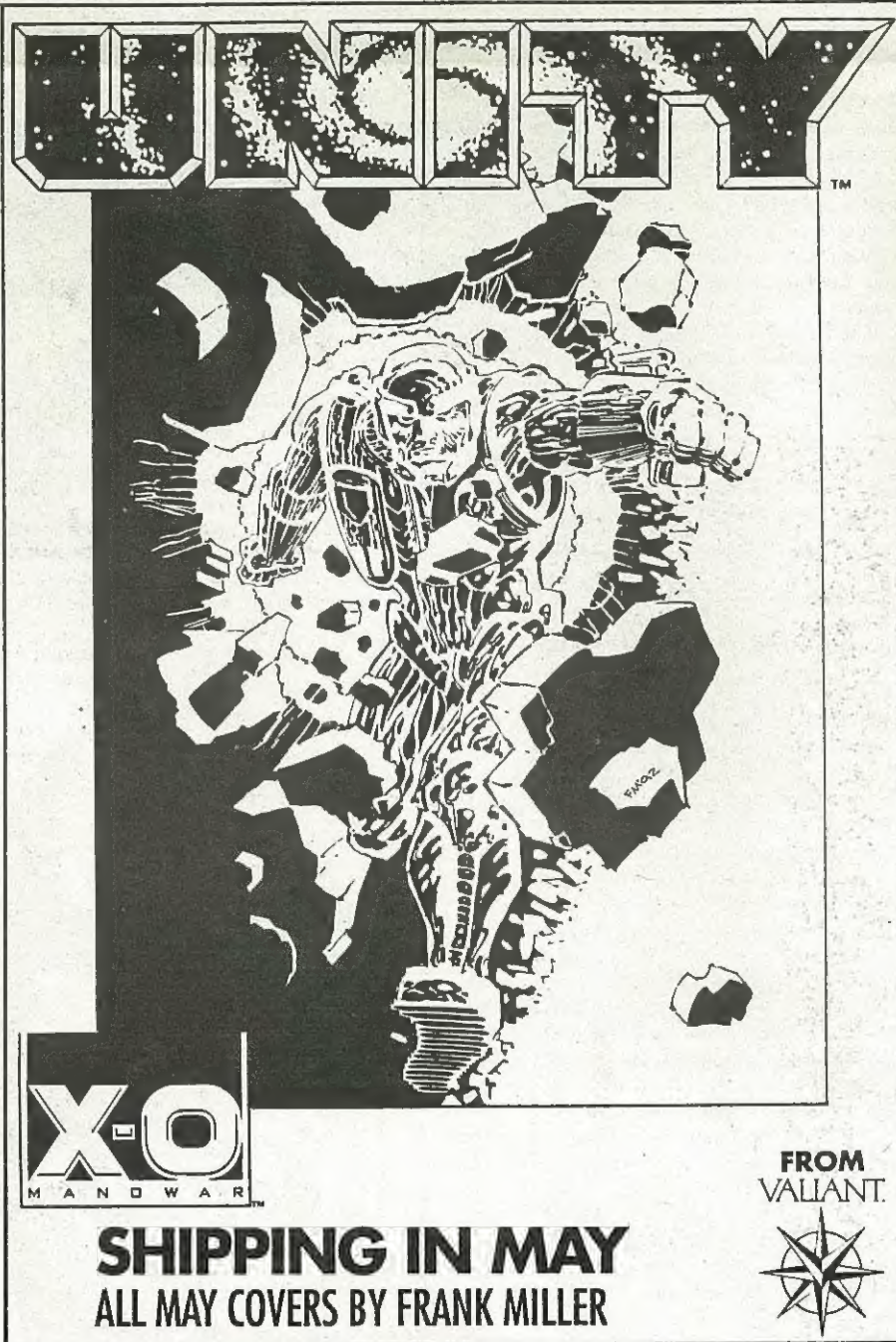
Debt of Honor marks Claremont's first major project since he left the **X-Men** last year; he brings to this project the same skill at characterization and plot development that made him such a fan favorite on the mutant titles in the 1980's. Adam Hughes' stunning pencil art is inked by Karl Story; Tom McCraw supplies the blue-line color, while Dave Dorman paints the cover. **Star Trek: Debt of Honor**, a 96-page hardcover, is priced at \$24.95.



Star Trek: Debt of Honor ©1992 Paramount Pictures



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SHIPPING IN MAY
ALL MAY COVERS BY FRANK MILLER



Give & Take by Cliff Biggers & Brett Brooks

Each month, Cliff Biggers (in plain type) and Brett Brooks (in italic type) take a look at a few choice comics scheduled for release in the next few weeks. Publishers interested in having their books considered for review should send copies to CSN Give & Take, 2339 Milstead Circle, Marietta GA 30066. We'd prefer receiving copies of the books at least thirty days before they're scheduled to reach comic shops. Enough business--now let's talk comics!

Three years ago, several months after the release of the Warner Bros. film *Batman*, DC released the first issue of a new Batman title intended for a more sophisticated audience, *Legends of the Dark Knight*.

This year, just prior to the release of the Warner Bros. film *Batman Returns*, DC is releasing the first issue of a new Batman title intended for a more sophisticated audience, *Batman: Shadow of the Bat*.

Once you get beyond those similarities, however, there's remarkably little that *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* has in common with *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*. While the 1989 title afforded talented creators a chance to try their hands at Batman story arcs, the new title is an ongoing monthly series with its own regular creative team, offering the sort of hard-edged Batman adventure fans have enjoyed in the pages of Batman one-shots, special projects, and graphic novels.

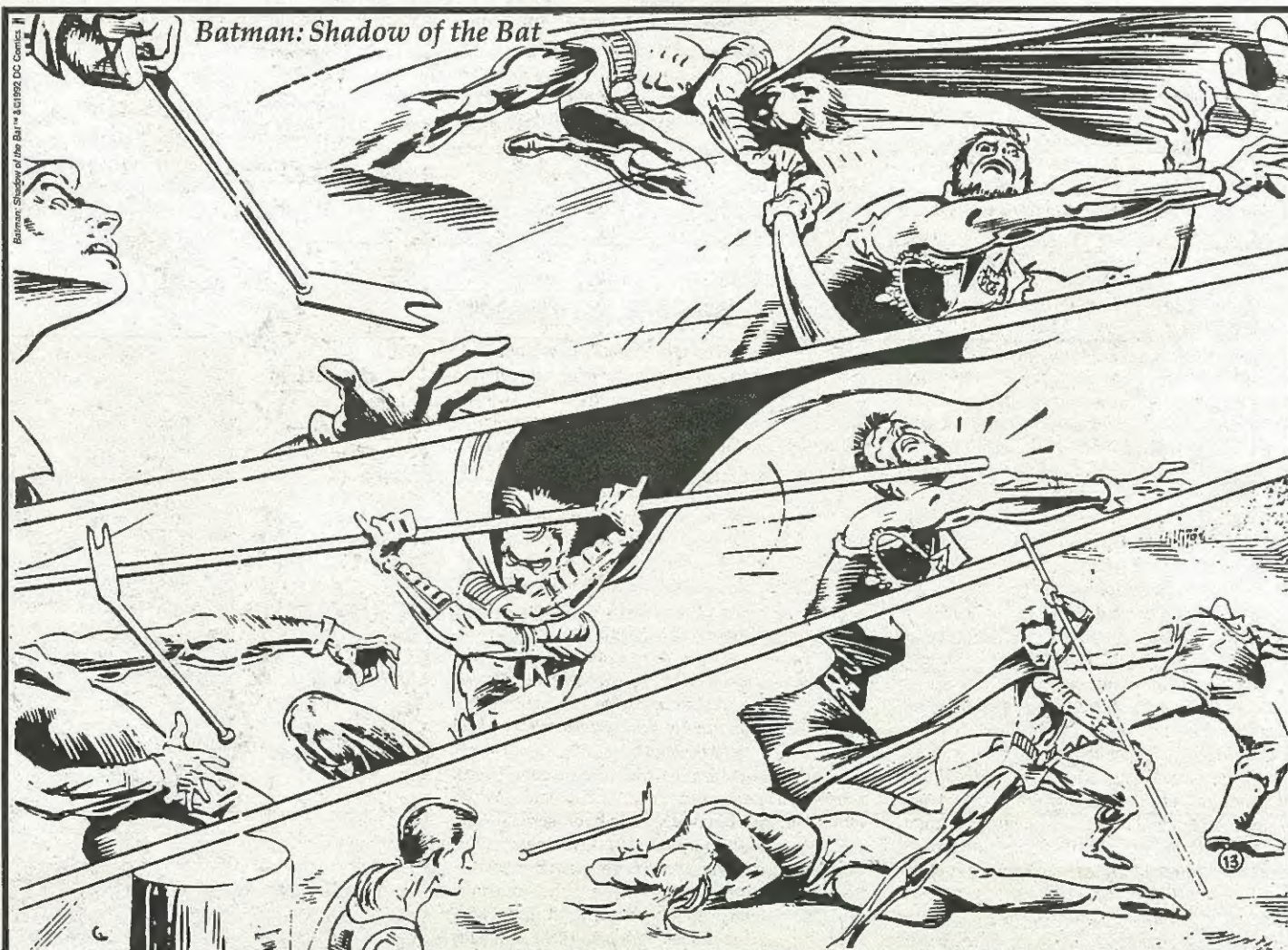
Three years ago, Warner Bros. focused all the attention on the *Batman* film, leaving the comic that inspired it all in a bit of a publicity vacuum. This year, though, DC is sharing in the publicity spotlight, rolling out a number of significant (and in some cases experimental) Batman projects. *Shadow of the Bat* is the project that has the greatest promise for fans, because it gives them a powerful monthly addition (or, in some cases) alternative to the more standard Batman tales found in *Batman* and *Detective Comics*. The series presents a more developed look into the personality of Batman, his supporting characters, and his villains; the emphasis here is on character as much as plot.

Some writers could quickly abuse this sort of a character-driven approach; it's easy to transform a character as stark as Batman into a stereotyped, lackluster avenger. Thankfully, DC has given the writing assignment to Alan Grant, who has proven his understanding of the character in the pages of *Detective Comics* and *Batman*. Grant manages to emphasize the noir approach to Batman without flattening the character into absolute predictability.

Grant does far more than just present the character of Batman—he also emphasizes the mood of Batman. The reader always feels a little uneasy while reading this story, as though there was something deep down inside that was disturbing you, but you couldn't exactly identify the cause of the discomfort. As the story progresses, you come to realize what the cause is and you want things to happen to make you feel better, but it's too late, because the issue is over. Grant wants to leave the reader with this feeling...

The first *Shadow of the Bat* story arc is set in Arkham Asylum—the same asylum that gave birth to the superb Morrison-McKean graphic novel. Then again, maybe it isn't the same asylum at all—because Jeremiah Arkham, the nephew of the asylum's original architect, has renovated the asylum, turning it into a high-tech chamber of horrors for its inmates, confronting them with their worst fears and denying them all but the most basic care.

How does Batman feel about this? Well, it's safe to say that he isn't happy—because he, too, is a captive in the revitalized Arkham Asylum, brought there by means only alluded to in the first issue (but sure to be developed as the story progresses). This is, in fact, one of Grant's strong suits; he realizes when *not* to tell the whole story, keeping readers hanging on for further developments. The biggest frustration Batman fans will face at the end of this first issue is the wait for the



second part of the story.

That is the same thing that I was saying. Grant keeps the reader off balance, in the dark, giving him glimpses into something so dark that it couldn't possibly be real; of course, one of the most frightening aspects of this story is the semblance to reality that it evokes—the events and situations in this book could be all too real.

Grant also manages to do something that most writers find difficult, if not impossible: he has introduced both Robin and Nightwing into a Batman story without destroying its gothic mood. Usually, the addition of either Batman's current or former sidekick negates the "dark knight" aspect of Batman's character; it's indicative of Grant's skill that he doesn't have to abandon these two characters in order to maintain his story's mood.

Artistically, Grant is working with the best artist illustrating Batman's exploits on a regular basis: Norm Breyfogle, who has developed from a talented member of the Batman stable of artists to a star illustrator who is the best monthly artist Batman has had since Alan Davis left *Detective Comics*. Breyfogle is a double threat; he has the storytelling sense of an old pro like Jim Aparo, but he couples it with the stylish finishes of a contemporary fan favorite. One look at his Nightwing and you'll be ready for Breyfogle to illustrate an entire series of Nightwing exploits...

One of the things about Breyfogle's Batman that makes it work is the fact that it is Breyfogle's Batman and not a copy of another artist who had already set the style for the character. That is one of the things that made Neal Adams a great Batman artist, as well as Davis, Rogers, and others. The addition of cover paintings by Brian Stelfreeze don't hurt the appearance at all—Stelfreeze is rapidly becoming one of the premiere cover artists in the industry today.

Naturally, *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* is going to attract a great deal of attention, simply because it's a new Batman title debuting shortly before the release of a major motion picture. I'm glad that I can say that it deserves the attention; Batman:

Shadow of the Bat is almost certain to become most fans' favorite Batman title very quickly.

Looking on the dark side of life is becoming a trend in the comics world. Books and stories are tending to show more of the corrupt underbelly of life than they have in the past. Of course, comics have always had villains who were vile, but even some of the most classic villains seem calm by the standards of today's more harsh society. Most people look at Dr. Doom as a glorious villain, but few people would claim to be frightened by a man like that. So, comics have decided to show us something to frighten us—something from the dark side of life. Which brings us to *Terror, Inc.*

Terror, Inc. is the story of—putting it bluntly—a killer. The central character is the man called Terror (and the head of the organization from which the title of the book is derived) who has seemingly no redeeming values. He kills for money. He recklessly endangers others, and will stop at nothing to achieve his goals. He is also a fascinating character. His reason for being—and the way that he exists—is captivating. He is not human—at least not in any way that I can imagine—but I'm not quite sure what he is, or even how he manages to survive. Nevertheless, he certainly does survive. Terror is a being who relies on other to stay alive; he takes their body parts and uses them to replace his own, which he needs to do often because his own body is rapidly falling apart. When Terror replaces his body he gets a bonus to go along with it—the memories and abilities of the body part that he has stolen—at least until they decay...

I don't know that I've ever seen a comic book present such an unsympathetic character. When Dr. Doom had his own comic book series in the early 70's, he was presented in a somewhat sympathetic light; here, we meet a character who is brutal, murderous, mercenary—and he's our protagonist! Writer Dan Chichester has quite a hurdle to clear to make *Terror, Inc.* work; he manages to do so, but believe me, this isn't a hero you'll admire!...

The first issue introduces us rather abruptly into



BATMAN RETURNS

BATMAN/DRACULA: RED RAIN

DARK KNIGHT ARCHIVES #1

BATMAN SLIPCASE SET

BATMAN: RUN, RIDDLER, RUN

DC

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Better Than Ever!

DC

COMING SOON!

FREEJACK #2
Part Two of Three
Written by Chuck Dixon
Penciled by Ernie Stiner
Inked by Tony DeZuniga
Cover by Max Siebel

The exciting continuation of Alex Furlong's flight from the bone-jackers! Based on the major motion picture!

Full Color Biweekly
Mini-Series
\$1.95 US/\$2.50 Canada

FREEJACK #2
Collectors' Edition
Part Two of Three

Direct Market version has FREE-JACK poster inside!

Full Color Biweekly
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\$2.50 US/\$2.95 Canada

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NOW
COMICS

© 1992 NOW Comics

Terror's world. He is trying to kill someone—for the fifth time. It seems that the life of the hired assassin isn't always easy, especially when the person you've been hired to kill keeps coming back to life. Terror does have a reputation to uphold however, and he decides to get to the bottom of the matter as quickly as he can. The bottom of this matter lies in a very deep hole however, and Terror might just come to learn what his name really means...

I really enjoyed that opening. The dilemma of a hired killer targeting a man who simply won't die is amusing in its ludicrousness; it's a great, offbeat kicker for a series this somber.

Writer D.G. Chichester has entrenched *Terror, Inc.* firmly in the Marvel universe. There are references to several heroes—both past and present—and an appearance by an old villain that almost destroyed the world once. But Chichester isn't facing Terror off against a costume-clad armada of bad-guys. Terror lives in the shadows of the Marvel universe—the place that no one wants to go, or even acknowledge. It is a frightening world.

You're right; this isn't a guy who'd show up in the pages of *Marvel Team-Up* or *Marvel Two-In-One*, if either were still published today... I'd imagine that many superheroes would have trouble deciding who was more repugnant, Terror or his vile targets.

To back up Chichester's dark vision is the equally dark artwork of Jorge Zaffino—best known for his work on the *Punisher* graphic novels. Zaffino creates a harsh, grim world that is only appealing because of the visual artistry that he uses. The people are real, and imperfect; the lifestyle and buildings are real, and decaying.

I'm an avid fan of Zaffino's artwork—have been ever since I first saw it, in fact—because he's such an expressionist. Zaffino relies on design and tone more than on individual illustrative panels; I think his work emphasizes elements of comic book art that all too many artists ignore.

Terror, Inc. show the decay of the universe. The external decay of the world is brought to light in the micro-cosmos of Terror's own personal decay—he manages to keep himself together by living off of others. *Terror, Inc.* is a wonderful book, but it isn't a book like anything else in the Marvel universe. Its taught, gripping, and dangerous—and too much like the real world, unfortunately.

Everyone knows that Eastman and Laird's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is the real TMNT, the original that inspired the more simplistic cartoon-based Turtles found in the pages of Archie's Turtles comics, right?

But does that mandate that the Archie *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* has to be a pale imitation of the original?

Not at all, I'm glad to say. If you have any doubts, give *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Adventures Special #1* a try and you'll see what I mean.

Archie's version of the Turtles simply can't be Eastman and Laird's version; the two interpretations are intended for very different audiences, draw from different influences, and aim for different goals. Being different doesn't mean being inferior, though; In *TMNT Adventures Special #1*, writer Stephen Sullivan teams with two different artists—Brian Thomas and Bill Wray—to prove that he can work within the framework of a young-reader's story to produce a very entertaining comic book, reminiscent at times of the sort of adventure that Bob Bolling made so popular in the pages of *Little Archie* in its glory days.

I particularly enjoyed the way that the two stories built on each other. The progression from one story to the next wasn't forced. The art for both stories worked equally well, with neither artist outshining the other. I am curious to see whether or not any of the younger fans out there notice the artistic strength of this issue. Most of the people who read comics today have a strange prejudice against certain books—most notably those for Archie and Disney—because they are for "kid's". I feel that if these same readers were to look at this book with an open mind, they could see some of the wonderful things that Bill Wray is doing. It's beautiful art.

I agree; I had forgotten just how good Wray could be when he hits his stride...

Both of Thomas' stories have a strong ecological bent to them; the first brings the Turtles into the middle of a brewing dispute between a noted environmentalist and an industrialist who hopes to turn forest land into a repository for toxic wastes, while the second tale takes the Turtles to sea on a

ship whose whaling captain is determined to hunt down endangered sea life (in this case, a sea serpent). Both stories are strong on adventure, featuring elements of fantasy (a family of Sasquatch in the first story, the aforementioned sea serpents in the second) that prevent these from becoming pedestrian stories that simply preach an environmental message.

Each story is well-crafted; the only drawback to reading the entire 64-page comic in one setting is that readers will notice a few similarities in both

stories (for instance, in both cases the Turtles have to step into to rescue innocent young girls who are threatened by the events that unfold around them). Thankfully, the differences in the two stories more than compensate for any similarities; the very different art styles of Brian Thomas (who illustrates the first story) and the already-mentioned Bill Wray (whose top-notch art on the second tale is sometimes reminiscent of early Harvey Kurtzman, at other times of Jack Kirby) present intriguing interpretations of the Turtles.

I have to stress that Bill Wray's art was especially surprising to me. Wray has been in the business for quite some time now, and this is the first time—that I can recall anyway—that his work has had such a strong flair to it. I loved it.

Okay, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Adventures Special #1* has a message to deliver, I won't deny it—but if you think back, Stan Lee, Carl Barks, Gardner Fox, and John Broome, among others, all wrote more than a few message stories in their times, but they managed to make pretty

TODD McFARLANE



COMING IN MAY 1992 FROM IMAGE

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entertaining, didn't they?...

Last summer, DC Comics tried something old, with a twist to make it new. *Armageddon 2001* was a story that seemed like a mini-series, but was instead only two individual books that worked as bookends to a larger story that crossed over into all of that summer's annuals. In *Armageddon 2001*, a new hero was born, and he raced through time in a desperate attempt to stop the creation of a new villain. He failed. This time around the heroes have to face a villain

who's decided to come out of the shadows, and confront the darkness within each of them...

The Darkness Within is the name of the story that brings Eclipso back into the DC mainstream as a villain who deserves not only respect, but fear. The storyline will once again cross over into all of this year's annual, with two bookend comics closing off the ends (sort of like their namesake implies). *Eclipso: The Darkness Within #1* tells the story of Eclipso in a way that has never been presented before.

The book is written by the ace team of Keith Giffen

and Robert Loren Fleming, with art chores being handled by Bart Sears, Randy Elliot, and Mark Pennington. In the first issue, we discover that Eclipso is a liar. He has deceived the world, and most particularly Bruce Gordon—who always thought he was Eclipso. It seems that Eclipso is much older than anyone realized, and much more powerful, as he decides to turn the one thing that has always hindered him—the superheroes of Earth—into his closest allies and strongest weapons.

I enjoyed the way Giffen and Fleming expand-

ed the power and background of Eclipso without having to totally negate everything that previous writers had established. Too often, comic book writers have relied on the "everything you have read before is a lie" crutch; this time, readers can enjoy a well-crafted story that enhances the character without nullifying his past.

Giffen and Fleming deserve high praise for what they have done with Eclipso. He is much more malevolent and threatening. But more than that, they have shown that heroes, no matter how noble and good they may be, have a dark side. The basic job of any hero is too enter a situation and, more times than not, beat the tar out of the villain in question—violence in its highest form. The way that every hero reacts is what allows Eclipso to manipulate them like puppets. He shows the darkness within everyone, just like the title says...

I like the idea that rage is the "darkness" within everyone; even the most stalwart heroes can fall victim to occasional bouts of rage—and because of that, these heroes can become Eclipso's as well. The villain becomes, on one level, a sort of metaphor for the villainy inside every person—but the comic is far more than an exercise in allegory.

The art by Sears and company is the finest that Sears has produced. He seems more in control of his figures. They have a stature and form that fits each one specifically, without managing to lose the heroic look that superheroes normally have.

I see a little touch of Art Adams in his art this time around, particularly the facial structure of the heroes; it's a nice touch, giving the heroes a very sturdy, powerful look. After this book, I'm ready to see Sears try his hand at a Superman title; he does a superb Man of Steel.

Armageddon 2001 suffered from a last-second change of ending that really hurt the book. *Eclipso: the Darkness Within* has less chance of being changed because, there are less secrets to be revealed—well, there are less identities to be revealed, secrets are everywhere apparently...

A few years ago, I was an avid science fiction reader; I've gone through a phase of sf burnout since then, but comics like *TekQ* can still remind me of the sort of science fiction I particularly enjoyed.

TekQ is literally packed with plot; in fact, if the book has any single fault, it's that the series is almost too packed at times. This isn't a series made for skimming; each page is filled with text that requires meticulous reading to fully appreciate the plot that Brent Dorian Carpenter is developing in this four-part miniseries.

TekQ revolves around a power struggle between Earth's most powerful nation and its most powerful corporation; it underlines the differences between political and economic power, presenting the struggle through the eyes of a gravity technician who very literally falls victim to the conflict—at the end of the first issue, he is hurled into an artificially-generated black hole, only to be regenerated in the second issue as a being of immense power who returns to Earth to settle the dispute that led to his transformation. *TekQ* is the sort of solidly-structured speculative science fiction that books like Epic's *Open Space* hoped to present.

While I was reading *TekQ*, the question that kept floating into my mind was: "Which novel was this adapted from?" Of course, *TekQ* is an original story, but it has the feel of a genuine science-fiction novel. This seems less like something that was designed as a comic book and more like a story that is being adapted to comic storytelling. The strength of Carpenter's story—the tale of Earth in its death throws and the attempts to save it—that is what makes *TekQ* so strong. Carpenter has quite a future ahead of him.

TekQ is also a book filled with visual promise. Carpenter is a good storyteller with a great illustrative flair; his artistic sense puts him far above most newcomers in the comics field. Ironically, Carpenter the writer is Carpenter the illustrator's strongest competitor; at times, the sheer weight of the words leaves too little room for the artwork.

A few years ago, after reading the first couple of issues of Dan Vado and Norm Felchle's *The Griffin*, I spoke highly of the series' promise; several years later, DC gave Vado and Felchle the chance to prove me right. I have the same gut feeling about *TekQ*; this is a comic teeming with potential, and science fiction fans (as well as comics fans who enjoy truly cosmic adventures) are sure to find something to enjoy within its pages.



Aliens: Newt's Tale is a story that most comics readers are already familiar with—the tale of the film *Aliens*. There are some changes though, most notably the fact that this time, it is through the eyes of a child. *Aliens: Newt's Tale* brings a new light onto the events of the *Aliens* film, showing how a little child feels about her world being destroyed by inhuman monsters—some of which she can't tell apart from the people around her.

If you are thinking, "hey, I already know that story, let's move on," think again, because the other thing that *Aliens: Newt's Tale* presents is the story that you didn't see: The story of how the *Aliens* infested the planet, and what happened to the colonists before the heroes arrived. The story is taken directly from writer/director James Cameron's script and adapted by Dark Horse scribe Mike Richardson. So, let me assure you, there is something new for everyone.

In late 1990, 20th Century Fox first announced plans to release a deluxe version of *Aliens* on videodisc, featuring footage left out of the original film. Late last year, they finally made good on their announcement; I was eager to see just what footage was included. The entire segment on LV-426, the colony planet, was included in the expanded *Aliens*—but here in the comic book, it's more fully developed, transformed from just an additional scene (a well-done one, mind you) into a focal point for an alternate point-of-view telling of the events of *Aliens*. I can safely say, therefore, that even a fan who has seen the expanded version of the film will find something to enjoy in this miniseries.

The art is handled by Jim Somerville and Brian Garvey, who manage to convey the view of a child quite well. There is a real sense that everything is being told from the point of view of a child. The rooms seem bigger, the people seem bigger, and, as a result, somehow the story seems bigger. Somerville and Garvey deserve their fair share of the praise for making Dark Horse's *Aliens: Newt's Tale* a success.

Almost thirty years ago, I was attracted to a comic series subtitled *Strange Sports Stories*; what makes that so odd is that I really don't like sports at all.

Some things don't change, I guess. I still don't like sports at all, and I still find myself attracted to a new comic series entitled *Strange Sports Stories*. The emphasis may be different, the types of stories may be more *Twilight Zone*-ish than science fictional, but I'm still attracted to it.

Why? Go figure... I certainly have no answers there...

I can say, though, that fans of fantasy are just as likely to enjoy *Strange Sports Stories* as I, whether they like sports or not. My favorite story in *Strange Sports Stories* #1, for example, is only peripherally a "sports" story; it is primarily the story of a young boy's desire to do the one thing he's always dreamed of—and, due to illness, he's always been denied the opportunity. "Over the Edge" is the sort of story Steven Spielberg might have attempted on *Amazing Stories*, with a grimly satisfying ending that even Spielberg might have been reluctant to present—but here, it works.

It's strange (no pun intended) that you should mention this, because I too had the feeling that most of these stories had that Spielberg kind of feel to them—and in particular the very one that you mention. The stories seem to evoke the feeling of wonderment that show like *Amazing Stories* and *The Twilight Zone* did, leaving you with a feeling that, no matter how ludicrous the events were, they might really have happened.

Mitch Byrd supplies the pencil art for every story in the book; Byrd is developing a real fan-favorite style that should make it easy for him to land pretty much any art assignment he desires. Writer Charles Marshall's stories are complemented perfectly by Byrd's art; a lesser illustrator could have flattened these tales, ruining their impact with lackluster visuals.

I was slightly disappointed with Byrd's outing on *Miss Fury*, but *Strange Sports Stories* makes up for it. Byrd is developing a style that is much like the art that is hot in comics today, but he still manages to make it his own—he isn't trying to be anyone's clone.

Strange Sports Stories scores a solid hit its first time at bat; if the team continues to play this well, this book could be a serious contender in the fantasy-anthology league before the season is through...

Let me guess, the puns were intended that time....
You're not too far off base there...



TekQ



Strange Sports Stories #1 ©1992 Malibu Graphics



Strange Sports Stories

The following comics are scheduled for release on the dates given; unfortunately, it is not uncommon for comics to be rescheduled or delayed due to various circumstances. As a result, the dates given are only tentative dates, and are subject to change. Also, different parts of the country will receive different books at different times; depending on where your local comics shop is located in relation to the publisher's printing site, your shop may receive these books later—or earlier—than the given date. If you have questions about delayed books, talk to the friendly people at your local comics shop; when CSN is notified in time, we will make changes in our checklist

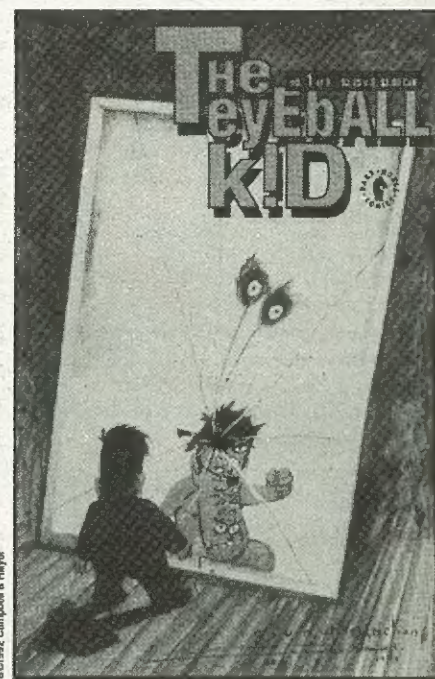
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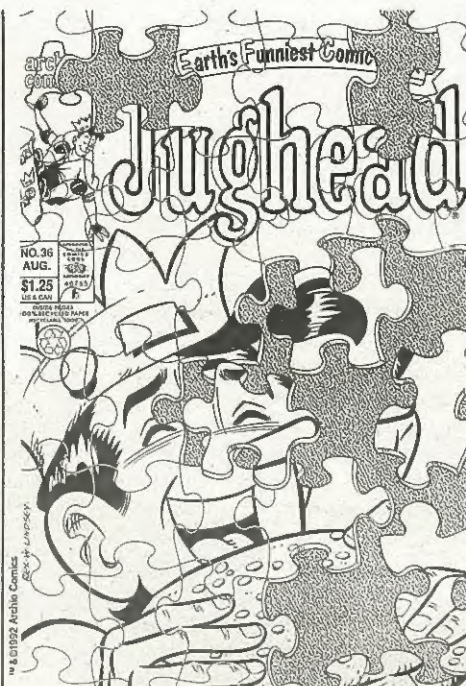
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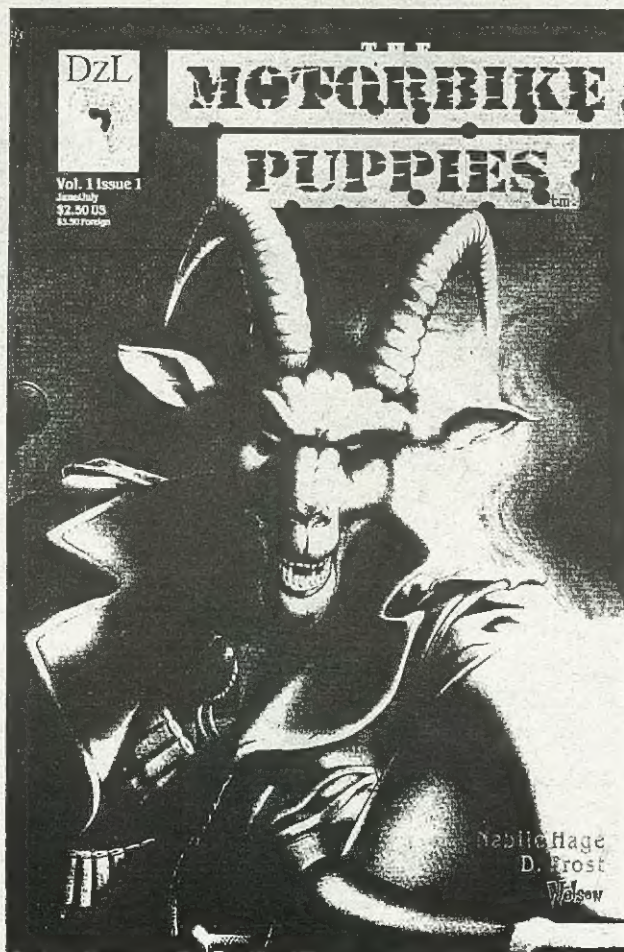
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NEXT WEEK **CSN** WILL FEATURE AN INTERVIEW WITH **TODD MCFARLANE**. NEED WE SAY MORE?

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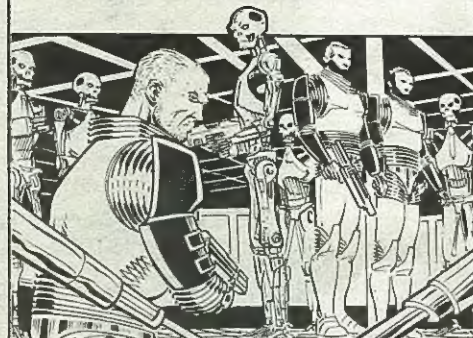
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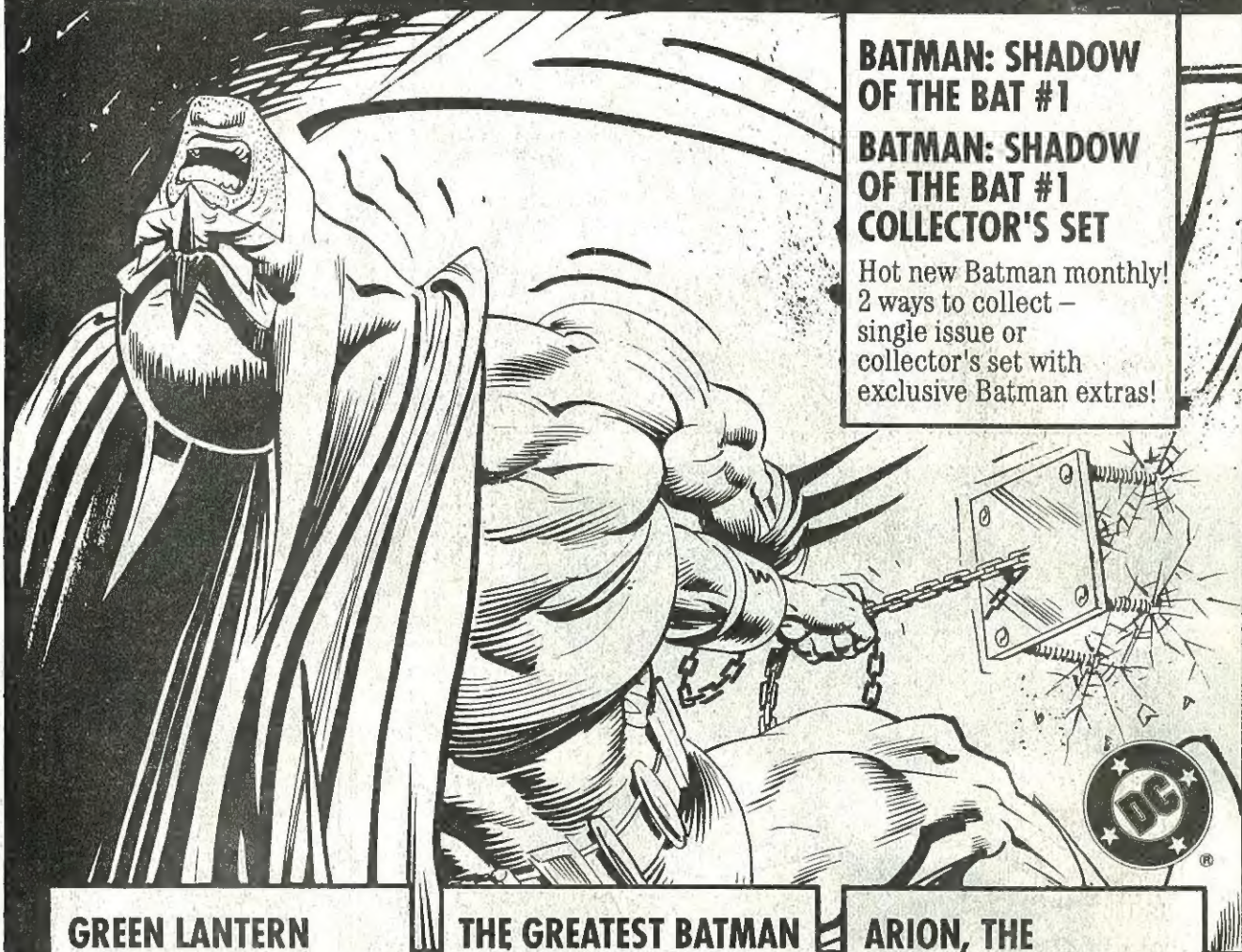
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